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tions. Mr. Harrison, feeling as he does the need of religion quite as strongly as that of common sense, is not content to refute theology and metaphysics by stating the reasons (such as they are) made familiar by the agnostics for condemning these studies as "irrational musings over ancient enigmas." Having battered the bishops and philosophers he then turns and rends Huxley on the ground that questions about the soul and the universe are "dominant questions" toward which an attitude of mere negation is both impossible and reprehensible. Respect is due to this feeling as a personal conviction, even though Mr. Harrison himself pays scant respect to those who, having the same conviction, happen to disagree with him about the answer to the questions; but respect becomes impossible when the positive scheme, which is to supersede the negations of agnosticism, is paraded as something scientifically established, while in fact it is neither stated with precision nor supported by any intelligible reasons.

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THE PROBLEM OF THE UNEMPLOYED. By John A. Hobson. London: Methuen & Co., 1906 (Third Edition). Crown 8vo, Pp. xvi, 163.

This book was published originally some ten years ago; but the keen interest shown by the English people in the question with which it deals has undergone no sensible abatement in the interval. The report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law has been eagerly awaited in the hope that it would contain important suggestions for legislative or administrative action in the matter; and a bill was in fact passed during the last Parliament, at the instance of Mr. Long, which was intended to provide better machinery than had previously been available for dealing effectively but harmlessly with temporary crises arising in this connection. Mr. Long's Act would, no doubt, be reckoned by Mr. Hobson among the "palliatives" which he discusses in his concluding chapter, and might or might not escape his criticism; but the remarks which he offers in that chapter on such proposals as labor bureaus and labor colonies have certainly not lost their pertinence at the present moment when these topics are in the forefront of popular and informed

debate. The very circumstance that Mr. Hobson's book has reached a third edition would seem to afford convincing testimony, if it were needed, of the intense interest widely taken in the subject, and of the powerful appeal made by his particular mode of handling the discussion.

For, whether we do or do not agree with each separate portion, or with the whole, of Mr. Hobson's argument, it cannot be disputed that he has put forward a thesis which has been carefully conceived and is lucidly and cogently presented, and that it demands our patient and unprejudiced consideration. We think indeed that the hope which he expresses in his preface, that the restatement made in this book of his conception of the injury caused by "under-consumption" may avoid some of the misunderstanding to which his earlier statements were liable, is likely to be justified. We doubt whether any instructed economist, imbued with the spirit of recent developments of theory, would wish or be able to dispute the possibility of the occurrence of the phenomena described by Mr. Hobson in this book. We believe that they would admit that dislocations between the consumption and the production of wealth may easily happen in the modern world of industry and trade, and be so extensive in range and so enduring in character as to produce the conditions associated with unemployment. For, unlike the older economists of the orthodox faith, we have now come to see that the "friction" impeding the smooth mechanism of the economic harmonies is a reality of which serious account must constantly be taken. We have learned, for instance, that there is waste in competition.

But, while we might thus allow that Mr. Hobson's explanation of unemployment had disclosed a true, though not perhaps the only, cause of the phenomena he is examining, we might still contend that the connection between the malady and the particular remedy he propounds is far less obvious and sure. He urges that the possessors of unearned increments are the chief offenders in this deficiency of consumption, and that legislation which would curtail their unmerited gains, or even deprive them of the whole, and transfer this wealth to the wage-earning classes, or to the community to use in their behalf, would reduce the dislocation, and thus prevent unemployment. But, we may ask, is it so certain in the modern world that the wage earners are necessarily spenders and consumers? They

seem, in fact, to be already becoming capitalists on an extensive scale when we look at the accumulated funds of their trade unions and of their friendly and coöperative societies. For coöperative production, in the acceptation of the term which is generally claimed by the adherents of industrial coöperation, can now, it may be observed, boast of enterprises which seem no less likely than private ventures of individual employers or joint stock companies to lock up capital in that fixed shape which Mr. Hobson deprecates ; and the houses secured to the members of building societies may similarly, no less than the unearned increments of urban landlords, diminish the consumption of the moment. In fact, the case belongs apparently to a class which is very commonly found in economic discussion ; for, as Mr. Hobson in this later form of his argument acknowledges, it is hard, if not impossible, to fix the precise point where saving becomes excessive, even when we recognize, without making a reserve which cancels our admission, the possibility of such excess.

And hence, although we may allow the force of his contention that by breaking up the general problem of unemployment into a number of separate problems which can be plausibly explained by defects of individual character or particular circumstances of time or place or trade, we may end by missing the real significance of the facts we are considering, and may fail in effect to see the wood for the trees, yet his fresh mode of treatment, stimulating and suggestive as it is, may not point with the absolute certitude which he assumes to the direction in which the permanent effective cure can be discovered. For this reason among others we may still be disposed to hold that, as the problem is not one but many, so the remedies are not single and uniform but varied and complex. But in Mr. Hobson's investigations of the statistics of the matter and in his careful attempt to define the range and measure the intensity of the phenomena he is examining, there is much that is informing and not a little that is convincing. His book commands, and deserves, in our opinion, the candid scrutiny and diligent study of all who are interested in the satisfactory solution of this perplexing but important question.

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